

Interview with John T. Doherty , Fall 1991

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JOHN T. DOHERTY

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Q: Good afternoon. This is Jim Shea, and I am here in Winchester, Virginia, interviewing my old friend and colleague of many, many years, John Doherty. Both of us have spent some years in Argentina. John, why don't we start this way? Can you tell us a little about your labor background and how you got into the labor attach# corps?

DOHERTY: Yes. I worked at St. John's College at the International Labor Center from 1955 until 1961, when I came into the Bureau of International Labor Affairs in the Labor Department. I worked as a labor adviser in the Trade Union Programs Division. From there I entered the State Department in 1965 and reported later that year to Mexico City which was my first post, where I served two years as an assistant labor attach#. Then I was off to Lima, Peru, where I served as labor attach# for three years, then a four year stint in Argentina from 1969 to 1973, and from there on to Brussels to the US Mission to the European Communities as labor attach#. While there I also had responsibility for the European Parliament and was there for three years before going off to the Senior Seminar at the Foreign Service Institute. Coming out of the Senior Seminar, I went to Lisbon, Portugal for two years, then came back and served briefly as Inter-American advisor over

Library of Congress

at the Labor Department and later as Special Assistant to the Deputy Under Secretary of Labor. I retired in December 1979.

Q: John, prior to your experience at St. Johns, weren't you in Paris?

DOHERTY: Yes, I actually started working in international affairs in 1952. At that time I was Vice President of the Maryland state Letter Carriers Union. You will recall that my father was the National President of the Letter Carriers Union. I had been a letter carrier in Bethesda, Maryland, and had been active in the local union. I was the editor of the paper, had been a local union officer, and then legislative representative and Vice President for the Maryland state Letter Carriers Union. From there I started traveling in 1952 with Italian groups as a project manager in 1952 for the old Mutual Security Agency. In 1954 I went to Bard College to their education center and then a few months later we transferred to St. John's College. It was from there that I went to the OEEC in Paris. I was with the European Productivity Agency at the OEEC. There were three representatives from the American Federation of Labor and three from the CIO. I was an AFL representative along with Tom Byrne, subsequently of the Teamsters and later on ambassador, and George Allen, who was from the Building Service Employees International Union. The three CIO representatives were Woodie Ginsberg from the Automobile Workers, Oliver Singleton from the Baltimore CIO, and Shorty Phelps from the Oil Workers. Q: John, did you get any training before you went off to your first post in Mexico, and did they give you any Spanish [language training] at the Foreign Service Institute?

DOHERTY: Yes, while I was with the Labor Department, I studied Spanish three mornings a week at the Foreign Service Institute at 8:00 o'clock, so I had a fairly good base. I went off to Mexico almost at a 3/3 [proficiency level]. Then when I got to Mexico, I studied each morning there to perfect [my Spanish]. In terms of other kinds of training, I think that having conducted workers educational programs and having dealt so much with Latin American affairs both at St. Johns and at the Labor Department, I was fairly well trained for

Library of Congress

the job before I reported. That plus basic orientation at the State Department and I think I was pretty well prepared when I got to Mexico City.

Q: The basic orientation was overall State Department policy?

DOHERTY: Yes, and it was conducted at the Foreign Service Institute. Also I took a communications course there and then a program was arranged for me to visit international representatives of the various trade unions headquartered in Washington. I also visited various international organizations, for instance, the OAS and with the Mexican Embassy and had quite a few discussions with people familiar with Mexico.

Q: How long were you in Mexico?

DOHERTY: I was there less than two years. I forget the exact number of months. Irving Salert was the labor attach#, and I was his assistant. I was anxious to move on to my own post and let the assignment people in Washington know that I was available for transfer if they had any openings. That's when I went off to Lima, Peru.

Q: What were your impressions of the Mexican Confederation of Labor (CTM) and its Secretary General Fidel Velasquez?

DOHERTY: Well, I guess my impressions of Fidel Velasquez are lasting because he's lasting. (laughter) I understand he's still [in power]. This is 1991 and that was 1965 and he was in control for many years before that. He was a very powerful man and a very interesting man. Even though he struck fear in the hearts of an awful lot of labor attach#s visiting from other countries, I found him to be very open to discussions, and even though I was the assistant labor attach#, I found it very easy to arrange meetings with him and to have talks with him. I thought that he was quite a formidable political and labor leader and that he was one of the real forces in the country. If you talked to Fidel Velasquez, you had a fairly good idea of what the truth was about a situation.

Library of Congress

Q: I always had the idea that the Mexican labor movement was held back by rampant corruption. Would you care to comment on that?

DOHERTY: Yes, there was quite a bit of corruption in Mexico and you have probably read that in recent years they actually put the head of the petroleum workers in jail, which I never thought would happen. I think wherever you find unions that are relatively advanced, particularly those that have been part of the ruling party, such as the CTM has been with PRI since the 1920's, you are going to find not only corruption, but you are going to find struggles for power and struggles for money. We had an assistant at the Embassy, Pancho de Real, who was a very interesting old fellow-He had been with Carranza during the revolution- and whenever a Mexican labor leader would die he would feign grieving and wipe a tear from his eye and say, "We have lost another millionaire." And probably he was right. (laughter)

Q: Who was our Ambassador at that time?

DOHERTY: It was Fulton Freeman, a wonderful man, who had a very good understanding of the political situation in Mexico including the unions and the trade union movement, the CTM, and Fidel Velasquez and how they all fit in. Going back just a minute [to the issue of] corruption, I found subsequently that in countries where the unions were not connected with a political party which was dominant or in power, then corruption diminished or was much less, if it existed at all. For example, the Peronists were very much a part of the Peronist government, whereas in Peru, the APRISTAs never really came to power until recent years, and therefore they didn't have money or power, and the opportunity to become corrupt was accordingly diminished. You can carry it to an extreme. I remember visiting the Sugar Workers Union in Orange Walk, Belize, an extremely poor union, and of course the leaders themselves were poor. There was no money to corrupt anyone. So I think a lot of corruption has to do with whether or not the [union is] connected with the

Library of Congress

party in power or with a strong political party and whether or not the unions themselves are well off.

Q: While you were in Mexico, John, did you see representatives of the AFL-CIO fairly often? I'm thinking of people like Serafino Romaldi, and Andy McClellan.

DOHERTY: Yes, in fact they had representatives there. One of them was Jesse Friedman, a dear friend of mine, who had worked with me at St. John's College and was of course Serafino Romaldi's step-son. Jesse was headquartered in Cuernavaca. He worked quite well with the ORIT and had very good relations with the CTM as well, particularly with the CTM's education department. In Mexico City itself from time to time we would have representatives of the American labor movement who were actually working in the ORIT office. At the time I was there, Joe Bermudez from the AIFLD had actually become the treasurer of ORIT. Frequent visitors to Mexico were Serafino Romaldi and my brother Bill and even more frequently Andy McClellan. In addition to Jesse Friedman working in Cuernavaca on the education side, AIFLD also had an office and representatives in Mexico City. I believe the last representative in Mexico City was Pepe Sueiro. So AIFLD had an office there and was working closely with the CTM and ORIT.

Q: And what about representatives of the various trade secretariats? I am thinking of people like John Snyder and Wally Legge.

DOHERTY: Yes. The trade secretariat people would come through frequently. They did not have offices there. I think only the metalworkers had offices there and the metalworker (IMF) officers were Mexicans. But there was a lot of trade secretariat activity. I remember the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union coming in and working in cooperation with ORIT and the AIFLD. They organized the first Inter-American Congress of Textile and Garment Workers [Unions], which was held in Mexico and was really quite successful. I remember Saby Nehama coming down as the representative of the Garment Workers and later on Sasha Zimmerman. I think the textile workers [provided] a good example of what

Library of Congress

could happen with cooperation between the secretariats, ORIT, the AIFLD, and the unions themselves in the textile field.

Q: Do you want to move on to Peru now, John?

DOHERTY: Okay. I arrived in Peru in 1967. The Communists were quite strong. The General Confederation of Peruvian Labor (CGTP) was in fact the dominant labor organization. There was a small Christian organization, which CLASC had been supporting both financially and with personnel, but they never really got off the ground. The other major trade union movement was the APRISTA movement which was the CTP. With an aging leadership and limited finances, they came to depend a great deal on ORIT and the AIFLD. One of the keys to this was that Arturo Jauregui, who was the General Secretary of ORIT, the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers, was also a Peruvian and an APRISTA. He encouraged that kind of cooperation and in fact the AIFLD set up what was called the Centro de Estudios Laborales Peruanos (CELP), which conducted courses mostly for CTP unions, but there were some independent unions as well who sent their workers to participate in those courses. The role of the American labor movement in Peru was, of course, much more pronounced than it was in Mexico.

Q: Do you recall who the representatives of the AIFLD were at that time?

DOHERTY: When I arrived, Tom Miller was the director. He subsequently went off to Asia [to work] with the Asian [American Free Labor] Institute. He was temporarily replaced by Bill Douglas, Dr. William Douglas, who has been involved in a lot of the educational activities of the AIFLD. At the time when he was in Peru as the interim director, he was writing a very interesting book on democracy, which was subsequently published. His assistant was Roberto (Bob) Cazares. They brought in Chuck Wheeler from Argentina to do some trouble shooting and help put things back together after some internal problems. That was basically the staff when I was there. Chuck Wheeler was acting director for awhile.

Library of Congress

Q: Were they an effective group?

DOHERTY: Extremely effective. In fact there were a lot of attacks in the press by the Communists alleging that the CTP had become nothing more than a puppet being manipulated by the Americans. In truth the CTP and most of its unions, with perhaps the exceptions of the Sugar Workers Union and the Clerical Workers Union, were just plain poor and welcomed financial support and the opportunity to have people come in to conduct seminars who knew something about organizing trade unions and putting together organizations.

Q: How strong were the Communists? Were they the majority?

DOHERTY: They were in the majority. They were extremely strong. They were called "Moscovites." Their main source of support came from the Soviets. There was a smaller group of so-called "Chinese Communists" that didn't really amount to too much, although it is interesting that today the Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) would call itself "Maoist" and probably embrace some of those early organizations supported by the Chinese. But it was the Soviets who backed the CGTP, and the CGTP was capable of shutting down the country-I always used that as a barometer-and the CTP, the APRISTAS, which on two or three occasions called nation-wide strikes, were not [capable of shutting down the country] without the participation of the Communists.

Q: And how effective were these strikes?

DOHERTY: Oh, they were very effective. They controlled transportation and utilities for the most part, and they could really effectively shut down the country. It didn't happen very often, but when they decided to do it, they could do it. They had that potential. They could be very disruptive. One of the main reasons the military continued to try to hold a tight rein on the nation was the threat of Communism.

Library of Congress

Q: Do you recall who our Ambassador was at that time?

DOHERTY: Yes, John Wesley Jones was our Ambassador, and his deputy was Ernest Siracusa. Subsequently, Toby Belcher and Ed Clark replaced them in those roles. That was about the time of the overthrow of the Belaunde government, the democratic government of Peru, which was overthrown by a military coup in 1968. A lot of it was blamed on negotiations with the IPC, which was Standard Oil. The Embassy was accused unjustly of having favored IPC in this whole undertaking. Although many [of the Peruvian military] had been trained in Panama under US auspices, a lot of them came out of their own [equivalent of] West Point in Peru, where Marxists had infiltrated. When the military government took over, it was not only Marxist in orientation and focus but strongly anti-American. On the labor side it favored the CGTP, the Communist Confederation, which gained even more strength and more prestige at the expense of the APRISTA CTP. So the fall of the government directly affected my work in the labor field. In fact I was declared persona non grata, but by the time they ordered me out because of my close work with the APRISTAS and with the CTP, I had already gone on direct transfer to Buenos Aires.

Q: Would you say that the militant Communists at that time in Peru were as violent as the Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path] movement?

DOHERTY: Oh, no. No, they did advocate a lot of marches and confrontations but they were not involved in the kind of murderous lunacy [that the Shining Path is]. It is difficult for me to comprehend any organization as wild as the Shining Path, except some of the younger people in Argentina involved in various revolutionary movements, which were also quite violent.

Q: I know, John, that when you got to Argentina the situation was “no bed of roses.”

DOHERTY: No, I succeeded you there. I think there were two months during which the post wasn't covered [by a labor attach#]. The “Cordobazo” had already happened when

Library of Congress

you were there, which was the worker uprising in Cordoba. I would say it was not so much an uprising as just wild riots which did a lot of damage and in which people were killed and a lot of people hurt. Then subsequent to that, Augusto Vandor, the head of the Metalworkers Union was murdered. I was in Argentina for four years. I came after the "Cordobazo" and I left after the "regresso," Cordobazo meaning, of course, what happened in Cordoba, and the regresso meaning the return of Peron in 1973 which was another very bloody kind of affair out at the airport at Ezeiza. So when people ask, "When were you in Argentina?" I say, "I was there from after the Cordobazo to after the regresso."

And it was a very tumultuous time. There was a lot of upheaval. That was the same time that the Tupamaros were very strong in Uruguay. These wild organizations, the Revolutionary Army of the People and the Montoneros, the youth wing of the radical left wing of the Peronist party, were doing very violent things. Their theory was that the only way to have a just society is to destroy what exists, and they set out to do that. These were basically Trotskyites on the non-Peronist side, and they would shoot down policemen and some innocent people. Some of the AIFLD classrooms were bombed. There was quite a movement on the left to sew disruption and to do it violently. This is what eventually led in the 1970s to the repression on the part of the military, which got completely out of hand. Some 8,000 people disappeared. I think that's when "disappear" became a verb in the language of Latin Americans. I was in Argentina at a very exciting time. You could see that with the return of Peron, who had pretty much dominated the country even while in exile in Madrid, the movement that he had built was beginning to crumble and that new forces were coming to play in the political situation in Argentina.

Q: John, why were many of these labor leaders assassinated?

DOHERTY: Well, there was some corruption in the Argentine unions, but the assassinations were more political than anything having to do with an Argentine style Mafia. Vandor was the head of 62 organizations which was a collection the staunchest Peronist unions dating back to Eva Peron's day when the unions developed there political

Library of Congress

power. Vandor was the most influential leader in the Peronist labor movement. When he was assassinated, the number one labor leader in terms of notoriety and popularity was probably Jose Alonzo of the Garment Workers. Jose Alonzo's case was a little bit different. He was the head of the 25 "participationist" unions. These were Peronist but they believed that the best way to represent the workers of Argentina was to participate in military governments, particularly in the government of Ongania. So when Alonzo was assassinated in 1970-he was gunned down on the street on his way to work-there was a lot of speculation that it was because he was advocating cooperation with the military government which [he thought] would lead to the restitution of democracy. That was considered traitorous by the hard-line Peronists. So to that extent, I think, his murder was somewhat different from Vandor's murder.

Q: Do you recall a "group of 32" headed up by one Juan Carlos Brunetti?

DOHERTY: Yes. This organization was the original labor movement prior to Peron and had its origins with the Socialists of Europe. These were the old Argentine Socialists for the most part who were connected with Americo Ghioldi and other Socialist political leaders. By the time I arrived in Argentina, they had almost completely lost their political power and influence. I met with Brunetti on several occasions. The [group of 32] had some trade union strength in Rosario and a few unions in Buenos Aires, but by the end of 1969, they were no longer considered to be significant.

Q: John, I believe that when you were there AIFLD had a fairly extensive workers' housing project.

DOHERTY: Yes, that was built mostly with the Light and Power Workers Union and a couple of other unions. I know that the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) was criticized in some circles, particularly in the old AID circles among people who had to accept what AIFLD proposed to do when AIFLD was able to get [a project approved] in Washington, and also by those who resisted promoters such as my brother,

Library of Congress

[AIFLD Executive Director William Doherty], who was an excellent promoter. There was a lot of resistance, and there were some people who say that there were mixed results in terms of what AIFLD was able to accomplish or not able to accomplish in these countries. In Argentina the AIFLD served as a bridge between the Peronists and the Peronist unions, which represented the bulk of labor in Argentina, and American labor as well as between the Peronist political movement and our government. AIFLD also contributed to bringing the Peronists back into the Inter-American trade union organizations. AIFLD served as a bridge through things like the housing projects and the education programs. You have to remember that in Peron's last days before he was overthrown in 1955, Peron was involved in direct confrontations with the United States. And going back to World War II, of course, he was very sympathetic towards the Germans. It wasn't until the last minute prior to peace being declared that the Argentine Government announced, in a very opportunist way, that it was with the Allies. So there was a history of antipathy, a history of Peron preaching what he called "the third position" in the world, where you would be neither Marxist nor Yankee. Then there was a lot of opposition to the US in the Peronist movement, particularly in labor circles so that most of the most powerful Argentine labor leaders were very anti-American. I think AIFLD, more than any other institution, contributed to breaking that down, not completely, but all of a sudden after several years of hard work there on housing and education and in other areas of cooperation, we became persona grata with the Peronist labor movement. The labor attach# could go into any trade union in the country and sit down and talk and that wasn't possible when, say, someone like John Fishburn was there [in the 1940's].

Q: I certainly agree, John. And I recall that the Peronists had an extensive labor attach# corps.

DOHERTY: Yes, in the days of Peron and after, that 10 year period from 1945 to 1955, Argentina had a labor attach# in almost every country of Latin America-certainly the most significant countries-as well as in Europe. Argentina had a labor attach# corps which the Peronists were quite proud of. It was the labor attach#s' job to go out and become a

Library of Congress

third force through an organization called "ATLAS," [the Latin American Association of Trade Unions]. They tried to form [an international labor federation with a] third position which would be between ORIT and CTAL, the Communist Latin American Federation, which Vicente Lombardo Toledano had founded and pushed. ATLAS was going to be the third force and the [Argentine] labor attach#s in those countries were the ones who were going not only to carry the day but carry the money and carry the support from Peron. He invested a lot money trying to organize ATLAS into a viable force, but it never really got off the ground.

Q: And one of your Ambassadors there was John Lodge.

DOHERTY: He was the Ambassador for my entire four years there. He was a nice man, but he didn't have a very good understanding of [the political situation]. When he first arrived there, he thought Peronists were Communists, and he was shocked to find out that a lot of them were Nationalist Socialists and right-wingers. But I think that over our four years together, he learned a lot about the Peronists. And let's face it. There were different grades of Peronists there. There were "participationists" and there were hard-liners. The sugar workers up in Tucuman were clamoring for Peron's return right to the very end. Peron was able to call strikes from exile in Madrid. He was able to pass the word that "I want a nation-wide strike" and there was a nation-wide strike, and a nation-wide strike in Argentina was total right down to people working at the race tracks and in the casinos. Peron had that kind of power.

I have an interesting story. The head of the Insurance Workers Union was a man by the name of Jos# Vallegas. He was called a "Peronista sin Peron," a Peronist without Peron. Actually he had been a Peronist but was no longer a Peronist. He was not even what they called a "neo-Peronist." Argentina is a wonderful place for a labor attach# to work, because the Argentines are great talkers. You can go into their offices and sit down and have a cup of coffee and talk about things that probably would be secret in other countries. You would get the whole scoop right there, or at least their version of it.

Library of Congress

Anyway, I went to talk with Bahias and I asked him to explain to me the “myth” of Peron, the mito of Peron. And he said, “Well, that's the problem with so many of you foreigners. You don't understand that it wasn't a myth; it was real.” And he recounted how when he was a nine or ten year old boy in Resistencia, the only thing he owned was a pair of pants and a rope that he tied them up with. And when the loud speaker came down the country road and said that all boys from nine to twelve were to report to the stadium in Resistencia to participate in the Eva Peron football championship, which is soccer to us, he walked eleven miles. And when he got there, they gave him a shirt with a name on it, and they gave him shorts and shoes which said “campeonato de futbol Eva Peron.” And when he finished playing that day, they said, “We want you here every Saturday, and that uniform is yours to wear.” And he said he wore it until it wore out. He was so proud of it that he wore it to school and wherever he went. And he said, “That's not a myth; that's real!” And that's the kind of influence Eva Peron had on poor people in that country. I thought that was a valuable lesson for any labor attach# coming in trying to understand the Argentine psyche and what makes them tick and how a Peronist movement could survive even though the leader had been deposed.

Q: This is very, very interesting about the “Peronistas sin Peron”. How did you classify Juan Jose Taccone and the Light and Power Union at that time?

DOHERTY: Well, I think Juan Jose Taccone was probably the most influential [leader]. Even though his wasn't the largest union, it was probably the best run union and it was probably one of the best heeled unions, because in the tradition of Juan and Eva Peron, they began all kinds of programs under the Perons. They owned their own hotels, their own vacation centers, their own clinic, and their own worker education school.

The workers of the Light and Power Company became totally identified with the union and with its leadership and I thought the leadership on the whole was probably the finest

Library of Congress

I had seen in Latin America. They were very astute politically; they were sophisticated internationally; and they were powerful in Argentina.

By the way, when Juan Jose Taccone hired people, they weren't necessarily from his union. He hired a lot of professional people out of the universities to head up various departments in his union. It was as well organized as any union I have ever encountered anywhere including the United States. Basically when we went to Argentina, we were not dealing with Peruvians or Ecuadorians or Salvadorans. We were dealing with Argentines and the Argentines, thanks to Peron, had developed a very strong labor movement. It was already strong before we arrived on the scene in the early 1960s.

Q: What was the attitude of the AID Mission toward AIFLD activities?

DOHERTY: The AID missions in Mexico, Peru, and Argentina, which are my three countries of experience with Mission-AIFLD relationships, were not sympathetic. They felt that labor had no business in development programs. They felt that AIFLD was being crammed down their throats, and they resisted it. I'm not saying that every AID director felt that way. When I was in Mexico, Clare Boonstra, who later became Ambassador to Costa Rica, was the DCM. I saw him years later and reminded him of a conversation [we had]. I was there in the AID office negotiating the AIFLD contract, trying to keep AID from closing down the AIFLD programs. At the time the labor attach# was on extended home leave, so it fell to me to defend the AIFLD program. It was difficult for AID to separate me from my brother, [AIFLD Executive Director William Doherty], and I remember being quite upset in the meeting as we argued back and forth. The AID director was a man by the name of Ainsworth. Finally when the meeting broke up, Clare Boonstra asked me into his office, and he said, "You're going to have to remember something about your brother. He's successful; he's a promoter; and successful promoters step on feet, and when you were in there trying to negotiate an AIFLD contract, there were an awful lot of hurt feet. So whenever you get involved with this in the future, remember that." (laughter) Boonstra didn't feel that way about AIFLD; he was very supportive. Now AIFLD has gained

Library of Congress

acceptance over the years, but in the early days when they were getting started, there was resistance from the insiders to these interlopers coming in from labor. There were some philosophical differences, but I think personality differences also had a lot to do with it.

Q: Would you care to comment on Communist activities in Argentina at that time and particularly [on the role of] the Cubans?

DOHERTY: Well, that was interesting. Of course Argentina was the home of Che Guevara. He came out of Argentina as a medical student, I believe, and then as a doctor joined up with Castro. The Cubans tried mightily to influence the Argentine labor movement. They did not have a great deal of success. Most of their success was in influencing student organizations and in the "ejercito," the people's army, which was Trotskyite, and to some extent with the Montoneros. Most of their success was with the fringe groups, not with the main line Peronist ones. The Cubans were having greater success than the Soviets. There was an antipathy towards the Soviets among the Peronists. I was very much surprised after coming from Peru where the Communists were in the majority in the labor leadership. In Argentina the Communists were far less effective and were not really an element in the revolutionary movement that eventually brought repression from the military. I didn't think the Communists were all that strong.

Q: I can only recall one union which was under some Communist influence and that was the Chemical Workers Union. But I don't think they had any effect at all on the overall Argentine labor scene. After Argentina, John, what was your next assignment? Did you spend any time in Washington?

DOHERTY: In 1973 I transferred from Argentina to Brussels. I had been on home leave not long before that. I did come back for some French language training. The only French I had dated back to 1954 and 1955, when I was in Paris with the OEEC and much of it had disappeared, so I did go back to Washington for some French training before Brussels.

Library of Congress

Q: I would say that your work in Brussels was completely different from that in Latin America in that you were dealing with many of the trade secretariats and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in addition to the Belgium unions.

DOHERTY: It was different. My job at the US Mission to the European Community basically had three parts. One was dealing with the international organizations, primarily the ICFTU and the Christian WCL. The Communists were there. They had a joint office between the French CGT and the Italian CGIL. I did not have liaison with them.

Another major part of my function in Brussels was [to cover the activities of] the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), a relatively new body organized along the lines of EC membership. I also covered three or four secretariats. I recall specifically going frequently to meet with [the secretariats of] the textile workers, the journalists, and the teachers unions, which were headquartered in Brussels. On top of that, I [followed] the European Commission, with [a special focus on] the Commissioner for Social Affairs and with anything that dealt with social affairs in the European Community.

Then my third function was covering the European Parliament which meant being either in Luxembourg or in Strasbourg every other month, reporting on developments and general liaison. I was also in charge of the annual exchange between the International Relations Committee of the [US] House [of Representatives] and the European Parliament, which took up maybe a month of my time each year. So there was more diversity. One thing that was the same, when I compare my work in Latin America with the job in Europe, was that just as the trade unions in Latin America were connected with a political party and had a political philosophy, the trade unions of Europe were as well, and in dealing with the trade unions of the Benelux [countries], particularly Belgium and Luxembourg, I was dealing with Christians or Socialists or with Social Democrats, and to that extent I had already experienced the philosophical or ideological aspects of trade unionism.

Library of Congress

I say to people who preceded me there and succeeded me there as labor attach#, "Listen, let's keep this a secret. Being labor attach# to EC Brussels is the creme de la creme of labor attach# spots, because of not only the tremendously broad scope of the work but the fascinating kinds of situations which would develop in the various aspects of the work there." I think that the most important aspect of the work while I was there-and also [during the tenure of] Harry Pollak, my immediate predecessor-was that the AFL-CIO had withdrawn from the ICFTU, and therefore there were no American [labor union] representatives in Brussels at that time. The labor attach# therefore was probably the best contact that our labor people had, certainly in the way of liaison. I recall Irving Brown coming often to Brussels, and I would be in contact with the Belgian Socialists or with ICFTU people or ETUC people and have meetings at my home or at some mutually agreed place, and I would be privy to the conversations that went on. These were very interesting and exciting times. I feel that the job in Brussels is an extremely important one from a labor point of view, even with the AFL-CIO back in the fold and taking a more active role in European and international organizations there.

Q: John, it has often been said that the CIA was involved in the activities of the International Trade Secretariats and the ICFTU. Would you like to comment on this?

DOHERTY: Well, I think allegations of CIA involvement in labor-in Latin America as well as with international or European organizations-were greatly exaggerated. I'm not saying there was no CIA activity, but I think it was exaggerated in terms of all the sensational books in which you read about the CIA underwriting so many trade union organizations. I have no direct knowledge of what was underwritten by whom, but I do know that in my stay in each of those countries [that I served in], direct contact between the CIA and the labor organizations in those countries was minimal. It was practically nonexistent in Brussels. This [question of CIA involvement] stems from the post-war period when we were very much concerned about what directions the Soviets would be taking. With the Communists so dominant and growing so rapidly and strongly in France and Italy and

Library of Congress

elsewhere in Europe, I think we were unprepared for it. By “we” I mean American labor and the American government. In those days there was a lot of cooperation. Irving Brown was probably the point man on many kinds of things. We know that historically he became involved with the dockworkers' strike [in France]. I think a lot of the talk of CIA involvement has to do with the early days, not the days when I was in Latin America in the 1960s, although there was some, and not the days when I was in Europe in the early and late 1970s, when I subsequently went to Portugal. I thought the CIA involvement in labor was minimal.

Q: On another subject, John, how did the European unions regard the activities of US labor attach#s and the AFL-CIO, particularly people like Irving Brown?

DOHERTY: Well, there was a tremendous feeling, particularly among the Socialists of Europe, that the AFL-CIO was blindly anti-Communist and that the AFL-CIO's attempt to influence unions in the third world was misguided. These were mostly intellectual type leaders, and they could not accept the AFL-CIO's anti-Communist position on the international side even though these people themselves were anti-Communist. As a labor attach# in Europe, it was a different ball game. In Peru I was on my own. I might occasionally bump into a British labor attach#, who had a regional function, whether it be Peru and Bolivia and Ecuador or maybe Mexico and Central America, and to that extent I had contacts with labor attach#s from other countries. When I got to Argentina there was a group of labor attach#s, diplomats from other countries already organized. We almost had our own dean of the group. There were probably seven or eight labor attach#s. Just to tick off a few, there was a French labor attach#, a German, a British, a Swedish, a Dane, and a few others. I think there was also a Spanish labor attach#.

Q: Yes, there was a Spaniard.

DOHERTY: The Spaniard was there for many years.

Library of Congress

Q: And as I recall his name was Francisco La Matta.

DOHERTY: That's right. La Matta. Thank you for refreshing my memory. [In Brussels] we set up meetings with the labor attach#s, because the European or international leaders preferred to meet with us [as a group]. Although they were willing to meet one on one, they preferred to have a monthly meeting with the labor attach#s and one of us would take charge of that for one month and then take turns arranging these schedules. We would meet with the ICFTU or ETUC or with one of the secretariats. Sometimes we'd even meet with the EC Commissioner on labor. The labor attach#s from the various embassies there had a very close working relationship. We shared information, and we often talked on the phone. I found that this working relationship facilitated my work, and I am sure the others felt the same way about me and their colleagues in the "Labor Attach# Corps" as it was called. So it was different from working in Latin America where you were more or less working solo.

Q: Do you recall the Ambassador you had at that time?

DOHERTY: Joe Greenwald was the first Ambassador. Deane Hinton was our second Ambassador. Both are very fine men. Both were very supportive in terms of seeing the need for the labor attach# function, particularly as it related to the political [sphere]. One of the reasons why I was involved in the European Parliament was because of the relationship of the trade unions to the political parties. So they saw labor attach#s in a much broader sense, not just in the sense of labor reporting.

Q: And your final assignment, as I recall, was in Portugal and you went there at a very exciting time.

DOHERTY: It was exciting but my immediate predecessor, [Dale Povenmire], had the brunt of the excitement and the fear, I suppose, because things were very, very hectic after Portugal declared its colonies free in Africa and in effect brought millions of

Library of Congress

Portuguese home and tried to integrate them into the economy and society. (Telephone Interruption)

To continue on that point, with the overthrow of Salazar and the end of 40 years of dictatorship, you had politics breaking out all over. The Communists became very, very active and for a while there it looked like they might be able to take over the government, so you can imagine how hard pressed the Socialists and the Social Democrats were, as well as ourselves, in trying to put together programs that would save the day. So those days were much more exciting than mine, although mine were exciting enough.

Q: Was Frank Carlucci the Ambassador at that time, John?

DOHERTY: He was the Ambassador when I arrived in Portugal. However, he left within less than two months, and Ambassador Dick Bloomfield took over. He came, just as I did, from Latin America. When Carlucci was there, the main thrust [of our policy] was to help the Socialists get on their feet as they were the most formidable counterweight to the Communists and the main hope there as we saw it-and quite correctly so for the future of democracy in Portugal. So Carlucci's focus was comprehensive in scope. When Bloomfield arrived in 1978, this [policy of strengthening the Socialists] had pretty much been achieved. Although the Communists were very, very strong, the Socialists had become the dominant party. The Social Democrats were also very, very strong. Our main objective then on the labor side became a quest to try to bring the labor movement of the Social Democrats and the labor movement of the Socialists together, and we worked very hard on this. The AFL-CIO, at the Embassy's request, sent in Mike Boggs, and Mike stayed there for a whole month in which he worked with both sides very diligently. Over a period of about a year, we were able to have some influence on the creation and development of what became the UGT, the General Workers Union of Portugal, which was founded in 1979. It was a cooperative effort of the Socialists and the Social Democrats with encouragement from us, the various trade secretariats, and the AFL-CIO. So in those terms I think that I was there at a very, very interesting time in Portugal.

Library of Congress

Q: John, in wrapping up this interview, would you care to comment on the role of labor attach#s and their background? Should labor attach#s come from the AFL-CIO or from among regular FSOs or from the Labor Department?

DOHERTY: Well, back in [1943] our first labor attach#, Dan Horowitz, went out to Chile, and then came John Fishburn to Latin America. We were late into the game and it was really after World War II that we took an interest in labor. I think we probably had the right mix in the early days. We had labor attach#s who came from the labor movement; we had labor attach#s who came from the Labor Department; and we had some career [Foreign Service Officer] labor attach#s. Of course today almost all of them are career officers. I have seen some wonderful, excellent people who were really well prepared who came out of the labor movement and who worked as labor attach#s, and to be quite candid, I have seen some very bad ones. I've seen some excellent career officers, and there are quite a few of them. One who comes to mind is Tony Freeman. Another is John Kean. I've seen them in the field and I've seen them function extremely well. I've also seen some Foreign Service Officers who weren't particularly good in dealing with workers and their representatives or in the whole scheme of social affairs. I don't think there is any set prescription. I think that the fact that career officers are now coming into the labor function and that they can be interested to stay in it for more than one tour is good. I am concerned that there has always been a natural bias against labor per se in the Foreign Service. I know a lot of Foreign Service Officers will deny that, but it is true. Therefore in an up or out system where people are trying to get ahead and become ambassadors-that is their ultimate objective-not many of them want to hang the labor stigma on them for more than one tour, but I think labor is an extremely important field and the Foreign Service tends to underestimate its importance, particularly in the light of the relationship of unions world wide with political movements.

*Q: Thank you very much, John. I think that was a very fine answer because I agree with it.
(Laughter)*

Library of Congress

DOHERTY: Yes, but when you get two people who agree with each other you don't really resolve anything! Do you?

Q: John, looking over the [interview outline], I see one area of activity we haven't touched on-the USIA labor officers and the exchange programs. Would you like to say a few words about them?

DOHERTY: Well, [we used to have] an active and activist labor program. For example, when I went into Peru, I had an assistant labor attach#, a USIA labor officer, and a local Peruvian, who also assisted me, and two secretaries. Well, the Peruvian labor movement certainly was not that strong or influential to warrant all those people in one office in the Embassy. But there were times when I think you needed an AID labor representative, a USIS labor representative, and as much help as you could get on the labor side. I don't think that we are any longer in that kind of situation, particularly with the changes that have taken place recently in Eastern Europe, unless it's in Eastern Europe itself, where we are going to need that kind of personnel and cooperation in establishing ties and working together with the unions, as we did in Latin America. That may well be the case [in Eastern Europe]. I don't really know Eastern Europe, but it might be a situation where we need labor information officers and AID type labor people as well.

Q: And how did you feel about the USIA exchange program?

DOHERTY: Oh, well. I think I was one of the greatest exploiters of it. If USIA mentioned a grant, I immediately moved toward my phone, and I had a permanent list in each country I was in of potential young labor leaders whom I thought should be considered for scholarships or for visitor grants. I really fought in the Embassy meetings for as many in the social and labor field and in politics as I could. I was usually quite successful. I thought [the International Visitor's Program] was an excellent program, particularly in the sense that the foreign visitors were going to the United States and getting tailor-made programs and a very particular kind of reception. They were not just coming in droves as they did in

Library of Congress

the St. John's College days when we were doing mass orientations and conducting huge seminars. I think the Visitor's Program was far more effective because you could pinpoint people whom you and your contacts in the labor movement felt were potentially future leaders. If we look around Latin America today, we'll see an awful lot of those people who came to the United States under some grant program or other and who are now in positions of power. That isn't to say that all of [those who went] are. It's obviously a small percentage, but even so that made it worth while.

Q: One other matter I forgot, John, is the subject of US employers and labor- management relations in US firms in the countries in which you served.

DOHERTY: Well, generally speaking labor relations in US firms were enlightened compared with labor relations in their own national companies. There was a time in the early part of the century and probably right up through World War II when our companies had an attitude that they were getting cheap labor and since [foreign nationals] were poorly organized-I'm thinking of Peru in particular-they didn't have to pay much attention to labor or labor-management relations, but that day has passed. I think a very good example of that kind of behavior coming back to haunt American companies was the mining and petroleum companies in various countries. I think of the International Petroleum Company (IPC) or Standard Oil in Peru. There was a time when they were unjustifiably proud of the fact that they could hire workers and rent land for purposes of extracting minerals for next to nothing. I also recall mining companies in Peru which did the same thing and which really did exploit. I remember I was at the American Club shortly after the overthrow of the Belaunde government in Peru, and I was talking with an American business man who lamented that it was not like the good old days when the Marcona mining company could extract the ore and rent one of its ships to the government to bring the ore to the United States, and then fill up with ballast water in Panama on the way back and sell the water to the Peruvian government. This man said, "Those were the good old days." Well, the good old days were the bad old days that "came home to roost" with IPC. IPC, at the time it was taken over by the Peruvian Government, had developed quite wisely the finest system of

Library of Congress

industrial and labor relations probably in Latin America, but it was too late. The antipathy that had built up over the years [caused] the leaders of Peru to overlook whatever good the company had done in the way of housing and social development and industrial relations. The Peruvian Government took over the company, [an act which] caused great problems between our two countries at the time, because the Peruvian Government refused to pay compensation. Today I think that the most enlightened industrial companies in Latin America are US firms. We are living in a different era. Would you agree with that?

Q: I definitely agree with you on that, John.

DOHERTY: But there was a history of exploitation back in the early days.

Q: Yes, [for example,] the United Fruit Company.

DOHERTY: United Fruit would be another one which I meant to mention along with mining and petroleum. And United Fruit also has good labor relations today if you visit Honduras or elsewhere in Central America.

Q: I would certainly agree with you that many of these companies have much better labor-management relations overseas than they do here in the US. DOHERTY: Oh, I didn't say that. You said that. (Laughter)

Q: Thank you very much, John. I can't tell you how much I appreciate this interview. It's been a pleasure for me.

DOHERTY: It's been my pleasure, too, Jim.

End of interview